

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do the colonoscopies need to be re-done?

An investigation has found that colonoscopies performed or supervised by the surgeon were incomplete, which may have affected the accuracy of the resulting diagnoses. The types of issues we identified as part of the clinical investigation include Dr Schmidt taking insufficient time to complete the procedure as well as other issues related to thoroughness. While in the majority of cases, the risk to patients is low, many of the affected patients will need to undertake a follow-up colonoscopy as a precautionary measure.

How are you deciding who does/does not need a follow-up colonoscopy? Why?

Each patient will be contacted and assessed individually by a highly skilled independent clinician. Once this assessment is made further treatment will be prioritised in order of the level of risk identified by the clinician as well as the patient's individual health needs. Not every patient will need a follow-up colonoscopy but it is important we assess cases individually to ensure those affected are getting the care and support they need.

Why are only colonoscopies being recalled? Are other clinical procedures performed by Dr Schmidt also being reviewed?

Following a thorough review of Dr Schmidt's cases, the independent, expert clinical advice is that follow-up treatment is not required for other procedures performed or supervised by Dr Schmidt. The other types of procedures performed or supervised by Dr. Schmidt were reviewed as part of this process but were not identified as a risk.

While in the majority of cases the risk to patients is low, we understand that patients who have undergone other procedures with Dr Schmidt may still be concerned. If you are experiencing health related symptoms that are causing you concern we recommend you see your GP.

Could people have cancer as a result of what's happened?

While we expect that the risk of this outcome is low it is important that we individually assess all affected patients to prevent this outcome.

As part of this process we will also be investigating whether any of the affected patients have received alternative diagnoses from other health professionals since their original treatment by Dr Schmidt.

Free and immediate support and counselling is available through our Mental Health and Wellbeing hubs on 1300-375-330.

What should affected patients do next?

We will be contacting all patients who had a colonoscopy performed or supervised by Dr Schmidt at the impacted health services from **1 January 2018**. All patients will receive an initial SMS message, followed by a letter and phone call to provide details and next steps specific to their individual case. Affected patients can also call the hotline we have established on 1800-950-677.

We understand that this is a distressing and complex issue and every affected patient will have access to support and counselling as part of their follow-up care. Please reach out to our Mental Health and Wellbeing hubs on 1300-375-330.

If you are experiencing health related symptoms that are causing you concern we recommend you see your GP.

What symptoms should previous colonoscopy patients of Dr Schmidt be monitoring for?

Colonoscopy is used to detect many different health conditions that can result in a wide variety of symptoms and some bowel related conditions may show no symptoms at all. Due to this we cannot advise broadly on signs and symptoms. We are contacting each of the affected patients to assess their case individually and provide tailored follow-up care.

While the risk to affected patients is low, as a general rule it is important that people monitor their health for any sudden changes, and if you are experiencing symptoms that you find concerning, we recommend you visit your GP.

Where do people go to get their procedures re-done?

A specialist team of clinicians will be in contact to arrange the follow-up care. You can also contact our helpline on 1800-950-677.

We will work with regional health services to minimise the need for any patients requiring a repeat colonoscopy to travel to have their procedures redone.

We understand that some patients will have a preference as to which health service they attend for follow-up treatment, and we will do our best to accommodate individual needs. Health care services across the state are working with us to prioritise affected patients, ensuring they receive their follow-up treatment as soon as possible.

Where travel is required, patients will be supported with accommodation and transport costs.

If I need to have a repeat colonoscopy, when will this be done?

Patients who are classified as urgent will have an initial consultation with a clinician and a repeat colonoscopy within 30 days of their consultation. We will endeavour to complete all repeat colonoscopies as soon as possible, including for non-urgent patients, who should receive treatment within around 6 months.

Why is the patient recall only going back five years?

Our clinical experts have determined that the risk to patients is so low that it is outweighed by the general risks associated with having an unnecessary colonoscopy. Every medical procedure carries a degree of risk and it is important to minimise that risk to patients. This means that a review or repeat colonoscopy is not required for patients who underwent a colonoscopy with Dr Schmidt before 1 January 2018 as part of this process.

Patients who undergo regular colonoscopy, and who are due for the repeat colonoscopy as part of their existing health management plan, should continue to with their scheduled treatment.

Who can I speak to if I want to make a complaint?

Affected patients and families can contact Victoria's Health Complaints Commissioner or NSW's Health Care Complaints Commission if they have any concerns. These Commissioners are proven, effective and free processes for any individual with a complaint or question about treatment they receive from any health service.

Patients and families in Victoria can also submit concerns about an individual surgeon to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). Details about how to do this can be found at the following page: [Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency - How to submit a concern \(ahpra.gov.au\)](https://www.ahpra.gov.au/About-us/Pages/How-to-submit-a-concern.aspx).

Patients and families in NSW can submit concerns about an individual surgeon to the NSW Health Professional Councils Authority.

People can also seek their own legal advice.

What other procedures did Dr Schmidt carry out at the affected health services? Are people who had these procedures safe?

Dr Schmidt performed breast surgery, thyroid surgery and skin cancer surgery at Albury Wodonga Health and her practice at Albury Wodonga Private Hospital also focussed on breast surgery, thyroid surgery, and skin lesions.

These procedures have been investigated and thoroughly reviewed by independent clinical experts who have determined that follow-up treatment is not required.

This is a complex issue and we understand that patients who have undergone other procedures may be distressed by these events. If you are experiencing any symptoms that are causing you concern, please see your GP.